Synopsis
For
Ph.D. Registration

University Department of Commerce and Business Management, Ranchi University, Ranchi.

Research Topic:

Women Empowerment through MGNREGA: A Case Study of Kanke, Ormanjhi, and Lapung Blocks in Ranchi District

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1. INTRODUCTION

The government of India passed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 in September 2005. Implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the flagship programme of the Government to influence the lives of poor masses and enhance their development. MGNREGA aims to enhance the livelihood security of households in rural areas by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.[1]

The act legally guarantees a hundred days of wage employment in a financial year to adult members of a rural household who demand employment and are willing to do unskilled manual work.

The act will apply to areas notified by the central government. The government of India launched Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in all gram panchayats.

The act was first proposed in 1991 by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. It was finally accepted in the parliament and commenced implementation in 625 districts of India. Based on this pilot experience, NREGA was scoped up to cover all the districts of India from 1st April 2008.

The statute was praised by the government as 'The largest and most ambitious social security and public work program in the world'.

1.1 Concept of MGNREGA

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act or MNREGA is an Indian job guarantee scheme enacted by legislation on September 7, 2005. The Act provides a legal guarantee for a minimum of one hundred days of employment every year to adults or the working members of any rural household willing to work at the minimum wage of Rs 289 per day.

The Government has merged the old schemes like the Jawahar Rojgar Yojana Employment Assurance Scheme and the Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana etc., to introduce a new scheme such as MGNREGA; consideration is that one-third of the unskilled workers should be women.

The MGNREGA scheme ensures livelihood security in rural areas. It allows any adult member to do unskilled work to earn a living. By targeting underprivileged groups, it is a step towards realising the right to work. [2]This act was introduced to improve the purchasing power of the rural people, primarily semi or unskilled work to people living below the poverty line in rural India. It attempts to bridge the

gap between the rich and poor in the country. Roughly one-third of the stipulated workforce must be women.

Adult members of rural households submit their name, age and address with a photo to the Gram Panchayat. The Gram Panchayat registers households after making an enquiry and issues a job card. The job card contains the details of the adult member enrolled and his /her photo. Registered persons can submit an application for work in writing (for at least fourteen days of continuous work) either to the Panchayat or to the Programme Officer.

The Panchayat/Programme officer will accept the valid application and issue a dated receipt of the application, a letter providing work will be sent to the applicant and also displayed at the Panchayat office. The employment will be provided within a radius of 5 km: if it is above 5 km extra wage will be paid.

1.2 Key Features of MGNREGA:

- **Legal Entitlement to Work:** Employment under MGNREGA is a legal right. If the government fails to provide work within 15 days of application, the applicant is entitled to an unemployment allowance.
- **Inclusive Participation:** The Act mandates that at least one-third of the beneficiaries be women, promoting gender equity in rural employment.
- **Asset Creation:** The program focuses on creating durable assets such as roads, canals, ponds, and wells, contributing to the overall development of rural infrastructure.
- **Decentralized Implementation:** Implementation is primarily managed by Gram Panchayats (village councils), ensuring local governance and transparency.[3]

1.3 Objectives of MGNREGA

- The act aims to enhance the livelihood security of the people in rural areas by generating wage employment through work that develops the infrastructure base of that area.
- The act provides a minimum guarantee of one hundred days of wage employment in a financial year to every household volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- Secondly, the objective includes the creation of assets for the development of rural areas. (such as roads, canals, ponds and wells)
- An important objective of MGNREGA has been to encourage women's effective participation both as workers and as administrators.

1.4 Goals of MGNREGA

1) Social protection for the most vulnerable people living in rural India by providing employment opportunities.

2)livelihood security for the poor through the creation of durable assets, improved water security, soil conservation and higher land productivity.

3)Drought proofing and flood management in rural India.

4)Empowerment of the socially disadvantaged, especially women, scheduled caste and scheduled tribes through the processes of right-based legislation.

5)Strengthening decentralised, participatory planning through the convergence of various anti-poverty and livelihood initiatives.

6)Deepening democracy at the grassroots by strengthening Panchayati raj institutions.

7) Effecting greater transparency and accountability in the governance.

1.5 Concept of Women's Empowerment

Empowerment is a comprehensive concept. Empowerment may be described as a process that helps people assert their control over the factors that affect their lives. According to the World Bank, Empowerment is the process of enhancing individuals or groups' capacity to make choices and transform them into desired actions and outcomes. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional process to enable women to realize their position, identity, and power in all spheres of life. It provides greater access to resources and knowledge, more independence in decision-making, more control over the circumstances which influence lives, a more remarkable ability to plan lives, and freedom from customs, beliefs, and practices. Empowerment demands an essential and radical change in the system of marriage and family, husband and wife relationships, and attitude towards socialization. In a general sense, empowerment is a process that gives a person freedom in decision-making. Women empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International Women's Conference in 1985 in Nairobi. Empowerment of women means the redistribution of power that challenges patriarchal ideology and male dominance. In the process, they increase their capacity and enable them to face new challenges in the household's overall development and contribute to the local community development (Chandra, 1997). Empowerment of women means developing them as more aware individuals who are politically active, economically productive and independent, and able to make intelligent discussions in matters that affect them (Srinivasa and Siddegowda, 2015). Thus, we can say that the Empowerment of women is essentially the process of uplifting women's economic, social and political status, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. Women's empowerment involves building up a culture, and a

political environment wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, discrimination, and the general feeling of persecution.[4]

1.6 MGNREGA Act and Women

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was passed on 25th August 2005, and renamed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in 2009. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provides a legal Guarantee of 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every rural household. The act became effective at the state level in 200 districts, guaranteeing employment up to 100 days a year to poor rural households on demand, through women employment was not the sole objective of the scheme but with its developmental goals it comes automatically. MGNREGA's guarantee of 100 days of unskilled work for every household, has been envisaged as a gender-sensitive scheme. The design features of this scheme make this scheme gender sensitive. The participation of women in the workforce has surpassed the statutory minimum requirement of 33 percent and through this, it has protected the women's justice and rights. The Act provides some explicit entitlements for women to facilitate their full participation. These include:

Equal wages for men and women – Equal wages shall be paid to both men and women workers and the provisions of the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 shall be complied with.

Participation in management and monitoring of the programme – The gram sabha will elect the members of the committee and ensure that SC/STs and women are represented.

Participation in social audit –The timing of the forum must be such that it is convenient for people to attend – that it is convenient for REGS (Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) workers, women and marginalized communities.

Providing support for child care, and convenience to households – The guidelines mention the need for a crèche at the worksite, and for the works to be convenient for families.

Ensuring that single women are eligible – By recognizing a single person as a ‘household the Act makes it possible for widows and other single women to access this work for widows and other single women to access work.

1.7 Participation of Women under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA), 2005, requires that priority shall be given to women in such a way that at least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested work.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (Mahatma Gandhi NREGS) is a gender-neutral Scheme which promotes the participation of women by providing wage parity with men, provision of separate schedules of rates of wages for women, crèche facilities, work-side sheds for children, and child care services. In convergence with the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), women mates have also been introduced, which again facilitates the participation of women. The Scheme also endeavours to provide work near the residences of the beneficiaries.

The rates of participation of women (women person-days out of the total in percentage) under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS during the last five financial years from 2018-19 to 2022-23 are given at below:

Annexure

The rates of participation of women (women person-days out of the total in percentage) in Mahatma Gandhi NREGS during the last five financial years from 2018-19 to 2022-23.

Sl. No.	**State/UT**	Percentage of women participation				
		2018-19	**2019-20**	**2020-21**	**2021-22**	**2022-23**
1	Andhra Pradesh	59.90	60.07	57.26	57.82	60.51
2	Arunachal Pradesh	38.69	40.47	41.33	44.73	45.85
3	Assam	41.08	41.77	44.08	47.57	47.50
4	Bihar	51.74	55.83	54.63	53.19	56.35
5	Chhattisgarh	50.05	50.70	50.50	51.62	53.16

6	Goa	70.67	75.59	76.55	78.40	78.40
7	Gujarat	44.53	45.13	46.52	46.62	47.77
8	Haryana	50.05	50.59	48.80	52.67	59.54
9	Himachal Pradesh	63.26	62.75	61.05	62.53	64.77
10	Jammu and Kashmir	29.98	32.93	31.67	33.34	30.67
11	Jharkhand	39.22	41.31	42.56	45.61	47.55
12	Karnataka	48.59	49.12	49.47	50.13	51.90
13	Kerala	90.41	89.80	90.49	89.61	89.82
14	Ladakh	NA	60.65	61.46	62.23	61.78
15	Madhya Pradesh	36.54	38.12	40.50	41.05	41.77
16	Maharashtra	44.87	43.41	42.93	43.67	44.73
17	Manipur	47.41	48.99	52.03	52.58	50.88
18	Meghalaya	50.15	50.51	51.37	50.61	51.49
19	Mizoram	38.15	50.86	56.82	47.75	48.20
20	Nagaland	31.56	35.63	36.31	38.15	42.91
21	Odisha	41.99	43.30	44.74	46.14	47.94
22	Punjab	60.73	58.79	56.92	60.42	66.55

23	Rajasthan	66.07	67.33	65.68	66.68	68.17
24	Sikkim	50.93	51.07	51.17	52.65	54.52
25	Tamil Nadu	85.40	86.30	85.37	85.70	86.41
26	Telangana	62.80	61.50	58.06	59.18	61.53
27	Tripura	46.19	47.03	47.62	47.53	48.44
28	Uttar Pradesh	35.28	34.28	33.57	37.25	37.75
29	Uttarakhand	55.15	56.62	55.14	55.51	56.66
30	West Bengal	48.18	47.93	45.20	46.75	47.96
31	Andaman and Nicobar	63.59	59.43	54.66	54.10	58.97
32	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
33	Lakshadweep	37.25	11.63	13.04	0.00	26.67
34	Puducherry	87.64	86.79	86.82	87.59	87.48
	National	**54.60**	**54.79**	**53.20**	**54.82**	**57.43**

Source: Data retrieved from NREGA Soft

This information was given by the Union Minister of State for Rural Development, Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.[5]

1.8 A BRIEF STUDY OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN MGNREGA IN KANKE, ORMANJHI AND LAPUNG BLOCK OF RANCHI.

Jharkhand is situated in the northeastern part of India. It consists of 24 districts, 260 blocks and 32,620 villages. Ranchi district is the most populous district of Jharkhand state. Ranchi district in Jharkhand is divided into 18 blocks across two sub-divisions: Ranchi Sadar and Bundu

Ranchi Sadar: It includes 14 blocks namely Angara, Burmu, Bero, Chanho, Itki, Kanke, Khelari, Lapung, Mandar, Namkum, Nagri, Ormanjhi, Ratu and Silli.

Bundu: it includes 4 blocks Bundu, Rahe, Sonahatu and Tamar.

Out of the 18 blocks of Ranchi, the researcher will take 3 blocks, namely Kanke, Ormanjhi, and Lapung, to study women's participation in MGNREGA.

In Kanke, there are 32 panchayats, and the MGNREGA scheme is carried out in 29 panchayats of the Kanke block. The data given below shows the 29 panchayats of Kanke block where the MGNREGA scheme is carried out, the total number of person-days generated in these panchayats, and women's participation in these panchayats.

* A **personday** is a unit of measurement indicating one day of work by one person. For example, if 10 individuals work for one day each, it counts as 10 person days.

No of Persondays generated

S.N	Panchayat	SC	STs	Other	Total	Women
1	ARSANDEY	48	690	1090	1828	989
2	BADHU	0	3493	711	4202	2592
3	BOREYA	135	1111	1260	2506	1716
4	CHANDWE	0	1231	887	2118	1412
5	CHUTU	0	640	342	982	411
6	DUMARDAGA	112	320	1691	2123	1415
7	GAGI	9	474	1118	1601	974
8	HOCHAR	0	706	1107	1813	722
9	HUNDUR	59	1553	1959	3571	2533
10	HUSIR	17	1419	964	2400	1625

11	ICHAPIDI	3	1256	2500	3759	1866
12	JAIPUR	21	994	347	1362	453
13	KATAMKULI	94	172	3236	3502	1620
14	KEDAL	141	462	1601	2204	1552
15	KHATANGA	0	425	462	887	601
16	KOKDORO	166	1262	3132	4560	2943
17	MALSIRING	139	3163	2603	5905	2741
18	MANATU	55	95	1151	1301	401
19	MESRA EAST	0	300	803	1103	633
20	MESRA WEST	86	59	1217	1362	777
21	NEORI	10	692	1331	2033	1414
22	PITHORIA	215	1009	3368	4592	1939
23	RARHA	538	6326	1186	8050	3726
24	SATAKNADU	151	1843	1024	3018	1461
25	SUKURHUTU(N)	199	840	1384	2423	1772
26	SUKURHUTU(S)	48	358	1608	2014	1294
27	ULATU	66	2439	2605	5110	2814
28	UPERKONKI	681	5361	2602	8644	4826
29	URUGUTU	269	1549	9627	11445	5831
	TOTAL	3262	40242	52916	96420	53053

Source: Compiled by Researcher from Primary data

In Ormanjhi block, there is a total of 18 panchayats out of which MGNREGA is carried out in 16 panchayats of Ormanjhi block namely Kute, Gagari, Chadu, Sadma, Baridih, Kucchu, Chutupalu, Jaydiha, Chandra, Barwe, Ichadag, Tundahuli, Hendevili, Karma,Ormanjhi, Pancha, Chakla, Irba.

No of Persondays Generated

S.NO	Panchayat	SCs	STs	Others	Total	Women
1	BARIDIH	254	1335	3742	5331	3197
2	BARWE	168	2826	1732	4726	2960
3	CHADU	839	4303	1446	19603	9951
4	CHAKLA	114	181	1330	1625	1161
5	CHANDRA	321	5973	3510	9804	4686
6	CHUTUPALU	60	2679	2815	5554	3117
7	GAGARI	353	6868	2874	10095	5577
8	HENDEVILI	648	6779	3206	10633	4715
9	ICHADAG	1	2295	2745	5041	1973
10	IRBA	0	781	233	1014	853
11	JAYDIHA	573	3941	2251	6765	2786
12	KARMA	162	1005	772	1939	1507
13	KUCCHU	229	2018	7074	9321	5675
14	KUTE	83	1480	8752	10315	4740
15	ORMANJHI	69	186	586	841	704
16	PANCHA	143	1323	1856	3322	1662
17	SADMA	252	7155	3699	11106	6355
18	TUNDAHULI	330	3683	1134	5147	2357
	TOTAL	4599	54811	62772	122182	63976

Source: Compiled by Researcher from Primary data

In lapung block there are 11 panchayats. All the 11 panchayats of lapung block involve in mgnrega scheme. The data given below shows all the 11 panchayats of lapung block where mgnrega scheme is carried out, the total number of persondays generated in these panchayats and the women participation in these panchayats.

Number of Persondays generated

s.no	Panchayat	SCs	STs	Others	Total	Women
1	BOKRANDA	490	4062	5411	9963	3908
2	DADI	331	6091	2468	8890	3357
3	DANEKERA	242	12454	9593	22289	10475
4	DEOGAON	425	6094	1017	7536	2915
5	DOLAICHA	2340	12021	11050	25411	10843
6	HULSU	168	3752	2469	6389	2567
7	KAKARIA	490	2437	1584	4511	1957
8	LATRATU	0	622	565	1187	672
9	MAHUGAON	73	4908	2763	7744	2154
10	MALGO	537	6118	4230	10885	4425
11	SAPUKERA	518	2402	2199	5119	2434
	TOTAL	5614	60961	43349	109924	45707

Source: Compiled by Researcher from Primary data

Increasing women participation

- As per PLFS-5, there has been a negative trend in women's labour force participation rate (LFPR or the proportion of labour force to the total female population) in rural India.
- For example: Rural female participation fell from nearly 25% in 2005 to 21% in 2014 and then even lower to around 17% in 2021.
- However, MGNREGA has helped mitigate the situation: According to the latest statistics from the Union Ministry of Rural Development,59.25% of the workers who used the scheme this year were women, which is the highest level of participation since 2012-2013.
- The proportion of women person-days in the total has consistently increased since 2021(54%) to (59%) in 2023.

Causes for increasing women's participation in MGNREGA

- The gap between MGNREGA wages and market wages is high in various states, especially for male workers who are paid far more than female workers in the open market thus making MGNREGA work much less attractive for male workers.

- Under MGNREGA, the clause of equal pay for men and women has also been adhered to and has resulted in shaping a better socio-economic scenario for rural women of India

- The PLFS -5 data shows that MGNREGA has reduced traditional wage discrimination in public works. Thus, women have looked upon MGNREGA, where minimum wages are to be paid, as a viable alternative.

- Several states also offer incentives for women workers under MGNREGA. For example, Kerela has set up a dedicated welfare fund that extends insurance against any injury during work and financial assistance to women workers above the age of 60.

- Similarly in Uttar Pradesh, Mahila mates are being appointed in the villages to increase the participation of women.

1.7 Role of MGNREGS in Women Empowerment

MGNREGS plays a significant role in meeting the practical and strategic needs of women's participation. It has become a beacon of light in the empowerment of rural women and contributed substantially to the increased living and economic conditions by creating equal wages for male and female workers. The role of MGNREGS on women's participation can be examined through the following parameters:

Income-Consumption Effects: By income-consumption effects, we mean an increase in women workers' incomes and, as a result, their ability to choose their consumption baskets. MGNREGS empowers women by giving them scope for independent earning and spending some amount for their own needs.

Intra-Household Effects: Women play a major role in raising the economic resources for their family but their contribution remains uncounted because they perform a significant amount of unpaid work.

In rural areas, the dominance of males in intra-household decisions has been seen. MGNREGS has a significant impact in converting some unpaid work into paid work and widens the scope of decision-making role of women in household matters.

Community-Level Effects: Women's participation at the local and district level of the governance process is low despite the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution. However, women's participation has increased after the implementation of MGNREGS in many areas. A large number of women workers attended the Gram Sabah meeting held in connection with MGNREGS. Community-level empowerment of women is one of the great achievements of this Act. There are various factors which encourage the women worker's participation under this scheme including the nature of work, which does not need skilled workers, the limited hours of work, availability of work locally, reduction of migration of male members, substantial jump in the wage rate etc. The participation of women varies widely across the nation. Women's participation under MGNREGS is measured in person days. At the national level women's participation has increased significantly to 53.01% in 2012-13 (till January, 2013). The highest participation is seen in states like Kerala (92.66%) followed by Pondicherry (83.96%). Although, women workforce participation under the Scheme has surpassed the statutory minimum requirement of 33 per cent, the Act stipulates that priority shall be given to women. In terms of implementation it mandates that a minimum of one-third of the beneficiaries are women who have registered and have requested for work. However, ideally, there should be gender equality in participation in MGNREGS. That means, women proportion should be around 50% both in terms participation and person-days of work. There are some issues which hinder women participation in MGNREGS in the State.[6]

2. Review of Literature

- Indu, Navjyoti (2018) emphasized that MGNREGA certainly enhanced the quality of life for women. The government must enhance the amount of employment and provide timely payments due to the rising demand for the job. Women in particular have profited from MGNREGA jobs because they have become more financially independent, more self-assured, more empowered, more likely to achieve food security, and more knowledgeable of their rights as workers. This has changed the trajectory of rural communities since it has opened doors for women, SC/ST people, and others who were previously excluded more likely to achieve food security, and more knowledgeable of their rights as workers. This has changed the trajectory of rural communities since it has opened doors for women, SC/ST people, and others who were previously excluded.[7]

- Arya, A.P and Meghna, S and Ambily, A (2017) studied the women who benefited from MGNREGA in the Kollam and Pathanamthitta district of Kerala. They found that MGNRGA had a profound effect on women's economic independence by altering their purchasing patterns and improving their standard of living. The empowerment of women in their homes has been enhanced by the fact that they alone decide how to spend the money they receive from MGNREGA. The production of assets and the improvement of living conditions for the rural poor are caused by shifts in rural people's ways of making a living through MGNREGA. Many people living in rural areas rely on a combination of agricultural and non-agricultural occupations for their livelihood.[8]

- Bhat, Basharat and Mariyappa (2016) investigated the partaking of women in the MGNREGA program in the Wahipura village in the Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir and established that the Indian government launched this programme to boost the self-esteem of unskilled workers, particularly women. Before MGNREGA, the situation of women in rural J&K was terrible and they frequently faced exploitation. Since MGNREGA helps reducing gender discrimination by paying men and women the same amounts of wages, women perceive that they have been compensated fairly.[9]

- Kelkar, Govind (2011) remarked that women's employment means women's empowerment, in a broad sense and aids in the reduction of disparities between men and women. Some of the most important aspects of women's empowerment that have contributed to a shift in power dynamics between genders are economic inclusion (through work, skill development, and access to financial markets) and possession of assets (through land, housing, and technology). Increasing numbers of women are taking an active role in the improvement of their homes and communities as well. In his opinion, the true scope of MGNREGA's effects requires more investigation.[10]

- Priyadarshini, S (2014) found that thousands of homes in Tamil Nadu have benefited from the MGNREGA programme, irrespective of its flaws. Its detrimental effects on agricultural operations and the standard of village assets are evident as most of the rural workers opting out of agricultural employment in favor of MGNREGA. Participation in MGNREGA was associated with a sense of empowerment for around 70 percent of the women who worked there.[11]

- Desai, Sonalde (2018) discovered that several barriers, including discrimination in the workplace, a lack of equal pay for equal work, and other forms of gender bias in the workplace, diminish women's empowerment, but the precise nature and degree to which these factors

exert their influence has not been well investigated. Places where women are not allowed to access their rights to work are known as blocked job opportunities. Women's employment and its cyclical influence on their financial security may be studied through MGNREGA, which is an unparalleled chance. Using a new method, researchers looked at how often women and men worked for payment in rural regions participating in MGNREGA. They discovered that women had a higher involvement rate than males.[12]

- Narayan, Sudha and Upasak Das (2014) used the National Sample Survey for the 68th employment unemployment round 2011-12 to investigate gender differences participation and rationing in MGNREGA. Researchers found that a differentiation policy was necessary to ensure that women from underrepresented groups, which includes widows and mothers with young children, had the same rights to MGNREGA program. There were three major concerns found with the program. The issues at hand were whether or not women have the same privileges to be paid employment benefits, whether or not they have input into factors design and implementation, and whether or not they share equally in the profits from public works. They came to the view that the state should take a more proactive stance in tackling issues of a higher order, such as condition of workplace, administrative discrimination, issues of sensitivity among implementation personnel, and variances within and between subpopulations.[13]

- Vij, Sumit and Manoj Jatav (2017) carried out research on women in MGNREGA in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and exposed that women's involvement in the program has been good enough in both states. Using the gender and development framework (GAD), they looked at the social and financial well-being of rural women in certain communities through the lens of their ability to make decisions at home and within society at large. The MGNREGA wages were determined to be far lower than those supplied by other casual jobs and were therefore insufficient to meet the financial needs of the family. This was a major factor in the falling enthusiasm of the workers of MGNREGA, which in turn led the rural poor to seek alternative means of subsistence even if jobs were available in the surrounding regions.[14]

- Dr G. Xavier, G. Mari (2014) noted that the 11th Five-Year Plan marked a shift in perspective about women's employment. It emphasised that women were important in fostering societal and economic progress. The United Nations (2013) cited the Expanded Public Works Programme in South Africa and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in India were two exemplary programs that have effectively supported women. Results showed that MGNREGA led to higher incomes and expenditures, a better

quality of life, and more empowerment for women in traditionally male-dominated rural societies. However, numerous health issues were plaguing the rural poor due to factors such as hot climate, lack of free time, and inadequate workplace amenities. Among them were aches and pains, dizziness, headaches, and generalized malaise. Furthermore, due to the lack of versatility in the MGNREGA Programme, women were unable to juggle their multiple duties at home and in the workplace. According to the findings, the majority of MGNREGA revenues were spent on family food consumption.[15]

- Gyaneshwar, D (2016) highlighted the need of tapping into the country's vast female population for economic growth across all sectors since women make up a disproportionately large portion of India's persistently poor. MGNREGA has helped women get jobs, helping to earn a living wage, and provide work in safe environments despite there are some negative aspects of it. MGNREGA shines a focus on women's issues because it has improved women's living conditions by guaranteeing equal pay for equal work. The following issues need attention such as corruption, a lack of attention in childcare facilities, payment irregularities, societal attitudes, gender discrimination, and lack of knowledge about women's rights.[16]
- Pragabhal, Das K.V. (2017) pointed out that empowering women economically is a precondition for eradicating abuse and exploitation, achieving parity in society, and enhancing social opportunity structures. Environmental resources affect women more than men. Improved health, greater education, equitable possession of profitable assets, and gender equity are all necessary conditions for women's empowerment.[17]

3. Research Gap

After reviewing the literature the researcher found that there is a research gap on the following points:

- **Regional Focus**: While numerous studies have explored the impact of MGNREGA on women empowerment across various regions like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Jammu & Kashmir, there is a lack of focused research on the specific socio-economic and cultural contexts of Ranchi district, particularly the Kanke, Ormanjhi, and Lapung blocks. This creates a gap in understanding the unique challenges and opportunities for women in these areas.
- **Intersectional Analysis**: Existing literature often highlights general trends in women's empowerment through MGNREGA but lacks a detailed intersectional analysis considering factors like caste, tribe, and socio-economic status. Given Ranchi's significant SC/ST population, a focused study on how these intersections influence empowerment is necessary.

- **Workplace Conditions and Health:** Several studies touch upon workplace conditions and health issues in MGNREGA but do not provide detailed insights into how these affect women's participation and long-term empowerment in specific regions. An analysis of the physical and mental health impact on women in Kanke, Ormanjhi, and Lapung is needed.
- **Decision-Making and Financial Independence:** While studies have observed that MGNREGA contributes to women's financial independence and decision-making abilities, limited research exists on how these changes are sustained or influence gender dynamics at the household and community levels in rural Ranchi.
- **Awareness and Rights:** The literature review mentions gaps in understanding women's rights and their input in program implementation. However, there is insufficient data on how these factors play out specifically in tribal-dominated and rural contexts like Ranchi.
- **Sustainability of Empowerment:** Few studies address the long-term sustainability of the empowerment achieved through MGNREGA. Questions remain regarding whether these improvements in financial independence, confidence, and social standing are maintained over time, particularly in Kanke, Ormanjhi, and Lapung.
- **Quantitative and Qualitative Impact:** While some studies focus on quantitative data (e.g., participation rates and income levels), others emphasize qualitative changes (e.g., confidence and empowerment). There is a need for a mixed-methods approach to capture a holistic view of women's empowerment in Ranchi's specific context.
- **Comparative Analysis:** There is limited research comparing the empowerment outcomes of MGNREGA for women across different blocks (e.g., Kanke, Ormanjhi, and Lapung) within the same district. Such a comparative study could highlight localized factors affecting the program's success.

- Further in Bihar, the state government had given a clear message to the administration that the performance of the officials will be judged on the basis of women's participation in the programme.

- The promotion of work culture among rural women through self-help groups (SHGs) such as Kudumbashree in Kerela has also done wonders.

4. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Studying women empowerment through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) is important because it will help to:

a) Improve the socio-economic status of women in the Kanke, Ormanjhi, and Lapung blocks of Ranchi district. MGNREGA has improved the socio-economic and psychological status of rural women and enhanced their livelihood security.

b) Increasing women's labour market participation can improve children's educational attainment.

c)When women are empowered, they benefit society as a whole. Empowering women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities and countries.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

a) To study one of the most important employment programmes of the government i.e. MGNREGA.

b) To study about total number of workers who are involved in MGNREGA in

c) To identify the number of women out of the total number of workers.

d) To study how MGNREGA empowers women economically, socially and physically.

e) To draw a comparison between the past few years and present years, whether the involvement of women in MGNREGA has increased or not.

f) To suggest measures for increasing the number of women in MGNREGA.

g) To find out the problems that get in the way of women's participation in MGNREGA.

h) Suggestions to make MGNREGA more effective and responsive to the needs of women

i) To identify the real issues and challenges faced by women beneficiaries under MGNREGA in India.

6. HYPOTHESES

1H0: Participation in MGNREGA does not significantly increase household income for women in the Kanke, Ormanjhi and Lapung blocks of the Ranchi district.

1H1: Participation in MGNREGA significantly increases household income for women, enhancing their economy in the Kanke, Ormanjhi, and Lapung blocks of the Ranchi district.

2H0: MGNREGA participation has no impact on the social status of women in their communities in the Kanke, Ormanjhi and Lapung blocks of the Ranchi district.

2H1: MGNREGA significantly increases women's participation in local governance and decision-making processes in the Kanke, Ormanjhi, and Lapung blocks of the Ranchi district.

3H0: MGNREGA does not lead to significant skill development among women in the Kanke, Ormanjhi and Lapung block of the Ranchi district.

3H1: MGNREGA leads to significant skill development among women in the Kanke, Ormanjhi and Lapung blocks of the Ranchi district.

4H0: MGNREGA participation does not significantly increase women's engagement in community activities in the Ranchi district's Kanke, Ormanjhi and Lapung blocks.

4H1: MGNREGA participation significantly increases women's engagement in community activities in the Ranchi district's Kanke, Ormanjhi and Lapung blocks.

7. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research Design

A research design ensures that the collected evidence effectively addresses the research problem in a clear and precise manner. This study aims to describe the current participation, empowerment, and challenges faced by women in MGNREGA and explore relationships between participation and various dimensions of empowerment (economic, social, and physical). Hence, Descriptive and Exploratory Research will serve the purpose.

7.2 Research Methodology

Research methodology specifies a systematic approach to solving the research problem. It explains the selection of representative samples, collection of relevant data, and application of appropriate research tools and techniques for analysis and interpretation of the data for scientific investigation of the problem. It ensures the research produces valid, reliable, and meaningful results. A clear and detailed methodology is essential for achieving accurate outcomes and drawing relevant conclusions. It aids in understanding the foundational aspects of the subject, developing a comprehensive view of the situation, and contributing to the generation of new theories.

A well-structured research methodology also benefits other researchers by providing a replicable framework, enabling further exploration in the field. By clearly outlining the research objectives and selecting appropriate methods to achieve them, the methodology ensures that the research process is both efficient and purposeful. It serves as a guide, documenting the intended goals and approach from the very beginning, thereby enhancing the overall credibility and utility of the study.

7.3 Data collection method

The researcher will use both primary and secondary data methods to collect data.

1. Primary data—Primary data are those collected for the first time and for a specific purpose. They will be based on information provided by the different blocks of Kanke, Ormanjhi, Lapung of the Ranchi district.

   The primary data will be collected by conducting a survey using a questionnaire. The self-structured questionnaire will contain closed-ended and open-ended questions. This questionnaire will be addressed to a sample of 500 women.(250 from kanke block, 150 from ormanjhi block, and 100 from lapung block) in the Ranchi district. Further, Stratified Random sampling will be used to collect data. The total number of women will be determined, and strata will be formed based on the blocks taken by the researcher.

2. Secondary data- Secondary data is also known as published data. These are available for use from other sources. The researcher will collect data from previous research, official statistics, letters, government reports, articles, journals, web information, historical data and information etc.

8.4 Analysis and Interpretation

Various mathematical, statistical, and computer-aided tools will be used to collect and analyse the data on the participation of women in MGNREGA.SPSS will be used for quantitative data analysis. The participation of women and its impact will be analysed based on the responses collected through the questionnaire.

Various statistical tools, such as percentage, average, standard deviation, regression, correlation etc., will be used for analysis. Hypotheses will be tested using Paired t-tests to compare household income before and after MGNREGA participation. Chi-square tests to analyse participation in governance and decision-making processes. In addition to that, ANOVA will be used to compare skill development levels across blocks.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- **Geographical Scope:** The study is confined to specific blocks within the Ranchi district, namely Kanke, Ormanjhi, and Lapung. This limited geographical scope restricts the generalizability of the findings to other regions, as India is a highly diverse country with varying socio-economic conditions.
- **Sample Size:** The study will rely on a small sample size, selected specifically for this research. This limited dataset may not fully capture the diverse experiences or perspectives of all participants involved in MGNREGA initiatives in the selected blocks.

- **National Generalization:** While the study aims to assess the impact of MGNREGA on women's empowerment, the limited focus on a few blocks means it cannot serve as a definitive evaluation of the program's impact on a national scale.
- **Time Constraints:** The research is also bound by time constraints, which may limit the depth and extent of data collection and analysis.
- **Data Authenticity:** Data manipulation, either intentionally or unintentionally, may occur. Respondents may provide biased or inaccurate responses due to social desirability, lack of understanding, or other external influences. This could affect the findings' reliability and the study's overall validity.

9. PROPOSED CHAPTERIZATION

The complete study will be presented in a structured format in the proposed chapters as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction, Literature Review & brief profile of the area.

Chapter II: A brief study of women's participation in MGNREGA in (Kanke, Ormanjhi, and Lapung) blocks of Ranchi district.

Chapter III: Empowering women via MGNREGA initiatives.

Chapter IV: Data Analysis, Hypothesis Testing & Interpretation

Chapter V: Conclusion, Findings & Suggestions.

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